

nating danger. But the danger is merely masked. Apparently slight causes, atmospheric changes, fatigue, irritation from dust, or the application of irritating drugs, drunkenness, seem to reproduce the discharge, sometimes with all the former severity, and a patient supposed to be harmless may then inoculate many of those around him with purulent ophthalmia. This granular eyelid clings closely to the poor Irish. At our Ophthalmic Hospital we call it the Irish eye. It is always among the abodes of them in all countries, and I do not think that it is due, as some say, to peculiarities of Irish constitution, but to mere contagion. The Irish take it into our workhouses, schools, and prisons. Yesterday I saw a fine-looking girl in the street, about 14 years old, selling flowers, with a pair of well-marked Irish eyelids. I alighted, and went to learn her history. She was born in England, of Irish parents, and lived in an Irish community. I offered to have her eyes attended to, but she thanked me with 'No;' adding, 'I have some eye-water, sir.' Here is a great scope for the application of preventive measures, and the special field for it is in those establishments which receive the poor, and in which there can be proper supervision and separation. I would subject the unfortunate possessor of granular conjunctiva to the same rules and regulations as if he were in an acute stage of purulent ophthalmia."—*Med. Times and Gaz.*, May 27, 1865.

MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE AND TOXICOLOGY.

54. *Definition of Toxicology.*—M. TARDIEU holds that toxicology does not exist as a true science; it is only an artificial assemblage of certain notions on chemistry, natural history, physiology, nosology, pathological anatomy, and therapeutics, having reference to divers substances, so-called poisons. Again, poison itself has neither existence nor individual characteristic. This is shown by the differences of definition of the word poison, the last of which, by Orfila, and the best is—"that the word poison may, and ought to, be given to every substance which, taken internally, or applied to the bodies of man or animals, destroys health or annihilates life by acting in virtue of its nature." Poisons do not constitute an order or a natural group the essence of which may be defined or characterized, while all substances without exception, which deserve the name, lose or acquire, according to certain external circumstances, their poisonous properties, the medicinal property being always contained in the poison, and the poisonous not being separable from the medicinal property. Toxicology, in its extreme factitious meaning, is forced to set out with the false notion of poison; it studies without method and without processes that are proper to it; and it borrows from physic, chemistry, and botany, the greatest part of the gifts which it appropriates, but which cannot furnish it with the doctrinal principles that are wanting in it. Poisoning, continues the author, in a medico-legal point of view, is one cause of violent death, and ought to be studied as such, in the same way as strangulation, asphyxia, and wounds of all kinds; poison, in fact, is a weapon in the hands of the criminal, and nothing more. It only exists in the condition of having acted; it only reveals and defines itself in its effects—that is to say, in the poisoning; the result is that legal medicine, called in to seek out and determine the cause of every violent death, ought to set out from the fact of the poisoning, and not with the notion of the poison, and should only occupy itself with the poison secondarily, with its state, nature, and physical characteristics; like as in assassination committed by means of a poniard or pistol, the expert examines the murderous weapon, brings it to the wound, and compares it with the injuries that have been inflicted.—*British and Foreign Med.-Chir. Review*, April, 1865, from *Annales d'Hygiène Publique*, October, 1864, and January, 1865.

55. *Elimination of Poisons from the Body.*—M. TARDIEU remarks that the elimination of a poison commences from the first moment of the poisoning, and
No. XCIX.—JULY 1865.

almost instantly after the absorption; if life should continue, the elimination will terminate at the end of a given time, and it would be very useful to determine this time precisely. The period of elimination is very variable, that is undoubted, and it varies under certain conditions which are not yet sufficiently known. The elimination must, like absorption, vary according to special physiological circumstances in the animal species, and according to individual organic conditions, the influence of which it will always be difficult to appreciate with exactitude. M. Chatin has, however, conceived that a law of elimination could be established, and has advanced the statement that the rapidity of elimination in various animals is in an inverse ratio to the faculty of their resistance to the poison—that is to say, a poison will remain so much the longer in organs the economy of which is least affected by it. There is variation also in respect of the duration in each kind of poison, and science is indebted to M. L. Orfila for setting the initiative of very useful, but unfortunately as yet unfinished researches. From these experiments, which are, perhaps, wanting in multiplicity, it results that the elimination of arsenic and corrosive sublimate is complete in thirty days; of tartar emetic, tartrate of antimony, in four months; of nitrate of silver in five months; and of acetate of lead and sulphate of copper after more than eight months.—*Ibid.*

56. *Can Poisoning occur and the Poison disappear?*—On this point M. TARDIEU is of opinion that a poison, almost in its totality, may be vomited and expelled the organism; but it is very rare, and nearly impossible, if the patient live, for a certain portion of the poison not to be absorbed and excreted so as to be detected by analysis in the excretions; it is also rare, if the patient die, for no portion of the poison to be detectable in the various organs into which it would be carried by the circulation. The true question consists in asking—do traces of poison remain in the living body for a determinate period, or does the poison remain indefinitely in the dead body? On this last point the author states that mineral substances resist indefinitely, but they do not escape transformation; some are fixed in such stable combination that chemistry will always detect their presence. Others, on the contrary, by being rendered soluble, are exposed to the possibility of being carried away from the debris of the body in the process of decomposition. Ammonia, which is produced in putrefaction, is the basis of these combinations; but the slowness with which the combinations form, and the still longer time they require for their complete dissolution, under the ordinary conditions of burial, leaves room to say that even after several years, and so long as any part of the body remains, chemistry can find the traces of mineral poisons in exhumed remains. Organic substances, or at least the greater part of those used as poisonous agents, notably the vegetable alkaloids, resist with remarkable fixity and for a very long period. At the same time science cannot say that the organic series are as fixed as the inorganic.—*Ibid.*

Dr. B. W. RICHARDSON states (*Brit. and For. Med.-Chir. Rev.*, April, 1865) that he has detected tartarized antimony in the bodies of animals four months after the last dose of the poison had been taken, the liver being the organ in which the poison was stored. The observations of M. Tardieu on the resistance to decomposition of organic poisons laid up in decomposing organic remains, are worthy of note. We remember seeing Messrs. Rogers and Girdwood demonstrate the presence of strychnia in the rotten tissues of an animal that had been dead two years as perfectly as in a solution of the poison recently made.

57. *Laceration in a New-born Child.*—Mr. R. KING PEIRCE showed to the Obstetrical Society of London (April 5, 1865) a fœtus, born at full time, and exhibiting at birth two lacerations: one extending through the integuments transversely across the abdomen, about the level of the scrobiculus cordis; a second one across the throat, exposing all the vessels and muscles of the neck. The two lacerations had all the appearance of incised wounds; but the evidence was clear that they had not been produced by any act of violence other than that of rapid delivery.—*Lancet*, June 3, 1865.